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HOMER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MEANING OF TRUTH

The Greeks called Homer wise, the wisest of all mortal men, and made his poems their only schoolbooks. It may be not unwise to ask the question, what kind of knowledge did the Greeks suppose Homer possessed—why was he called wise?

Of course, Homer occasionally inserts into his narrative sentences about life in general, man's happiness and misery, good and evil, such sentences as we call wise. None of these sentences nor all together make Homer the wisest of all men. The question cannot be answered by referring to these sentences. His wisdom is far greater, but not so easy to extract. It is not at all presented as knowledge, doctrine, or advice. The presentation is much more efficient than sentences and advice can be. His wisdom permeates his poetry and is transmitted in visible images of human actions and passions. It is wholly inseparable from what we call the "beauty" of his poems. Homer's wisdom and his greatness as a poet are indeed accounted for by the same reason. It is a kind of wisdom that is by no means Homer's alone. Homer shares it with Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe —but only with the greatest. But there the modest question concerning Homer's wisdom transgresses its limits and grows into a philosophical problem of the first magnitude.

Since a poet's greatness has to do with something we call "beauty" (in the sense of "quality" of a work of art), and since "wisdom" as a kind of "knowledge" refers to something we call "truth," there seems to be a link between "beauty" and "truth." But "beauty," we are told, is a matter of appearances, senses, taste, and pleasure; "truth," we learn, has to do with "facts," propositions, and the syntactical rules of a calculus.

I shall, however, not start from such words as beauty and truth, their meaning in a philosophical system or their possible interrelation. I shall inquire into the concrete case. It may be that the concrete case yields at least some suggestions that a philosopher concerned with the meaning of beauty and truth might be wise to consider.

I shall not even deal with the whole of Homer's poetry but only with one apparently small aspect of it, inquiring into the way in which Homer uses comparison and contrast. I do this because I believe that poetry, like art, never discloses its secrets to general observation. By looking with care into its minute ways there is more likelihood of at least a partial success. Thus I seek Homer's wisdom just where wisdom is least to be expected. This way demands, however, a watchful analysis of a few examples.

I

In his elaborate comparisons Homer unfolds between an "as" and a "so" a complete picture which runs parallel to the narrative. The narra-

tive itself in terms of a clearly perceptible event, hardly demands an explanation by means of a comparison. The function of the comparison on which the poet seems to insist has been a subject of controversial theories of which none I know is adequate.

(*Odyssey*, 19, 204.) Penelope listens to the report of the beggar who brings the first news of her husband. The beggar is Odysseus himself.

> She, melting at the sound, with drops of
> Tend'rest grief her cheeks bedewed
> And as the snow, by Zephyrus diffused,
> Melts on the mountain top, when Eurus breathes
> And fills the channels of the running streams,
> So melted she, and down her lovely cheeks
> Poured fast the tears, him mourning as remote
> Who sat beside her.
>
> (William Cowper, 1791.)

The interpreters usually look first for the so-called *tertium comparationis*. They pick out one or several such *tertia*—both snow and skin are white, water and tears flow, wind and mood change—but they do not get much help from any such enumeration. We are told that these *tertia* "illustrate." But what illustrates what? The *tertia* gives the "stimmung," as the Germans say, when they mean the whole of an emotional atmosphere that cannot be put into words. The term is vague and misleading; it is appropriate to romantic poetry, whose vices it hides behind its virtues, but beyond the scope of Homer's poetry.

The comparison encompasses the whole of Penelope's fate, past and future, in one visible picture. Our very eyes, looking at mountains, snow, and brooks, see her becoming numb and rigid in long and dreary years, see the hardness, coldness, darkness in her soul soften, warm, and brighten, anticipate even by a silent motion in the picture itself the future, when the ice will fully break, life flower again, and Penelope come to know that the beggar is Odysseus himself. Thus the image of the approaching spring entwines and relates to one another the implicit features of Penelope's inner life, and makes their impact visible. This is the function of the metaphor. Here is the *tertium comparationis*, not in single traits or in their piecemeal aggregate.

I must linger a while on this example. Here a kind of miracle is achieved. The two narratives bestow life on each other. Penelope's tears animate the melting of the inanimate snow—but the inanimate returns doubly the life it receives. As to the first animation, we may stammer something about anthropomorphism, taking a term for an explanation. Moreover, the greater miracle is the second animation. It is for the sake of this second animation that Homer inserts the comparison. How can a dead process give life to a live one—even for us today, when rivers and mountains no longer possess souls?

We should not slight the question. I shall try to formulate the preliminary answer, suggested by this first example. The image of the approaching spring achieves the miracle by just this concatenation of movement that is the true "tertium comparationis." Life is neither the dark nor the bright, neither the hard nor the soft. Separated and put side by side they are dead. Life is the dark that brightens, the hard that softens, the rigid that breaks, it is all of them in one—their mutual movement towards one another. The image of the melting snow entwines them; together they live—they have their being through their relation to one another as limbs of a single body. Since they are at once sensations of our senses, states or moods of our soul, and properties of objective things, they endow the soul with a body, the body with a soul, give life to the dead, and make visible the invisible. This is the miracle not only of Homer's comparison, but of Art. This is what the snow-covered mountain, the wind, and the swelling river do for the poet. Needless to say the movements of the language, qualities of consonants and vowels, rhythm and sound of syllables and words accompany the movement of soul and image—the ears guiding the eyes, the eyes the ears.

But, you say, for heaven's sake, this may have some bearing on a theory of art, but none whatsoever on Homer's wisdom. Give me but time for a few more examples, and do not forget that I am trying to show that the same reasons account for a poet's greatness and for his wisdom.

Homer goes on. (*Odyssey*, 19, 210.)

> Soft compassion touched
> Ulysses of his consort's silent woe;
> Yet wept not he, but, well dissembling still,
> Suppress'd his grief, fast riveting his eyes,
> As they were each of horn or hammer'd steel.

The similitude of the snowbreak still exerts its power and shines forth. It is still the struggle of hard and soft, though in another phase and tension. Odysseus softens in his heart, but hardens in his air and bearing. One visible image interprets the other—varying the theme in similarity and contrast.

Another instance. (*Iliad*, 17, 53.) Menelaos slays the young Euphorbos, who—as we know from *Iliad*, 16, 811, fights for the first time. An altercation precedes. Menelaos reminds Euphorbos of his brother's wantonness and death. Such warning, however, kindles in Euphorbos only the desire for revenge. He burns to still the pain of his parents by putting Menelaos' head into their hands. They fight—Menelaos' spear pierces through the still tender neck; blood wets the comely ringlets and the clasps of silver and gold which hold them together. It's all palpable—nothing seems to demand a similitude as illustration.

As the luxuriant olive by a swain
Rear'd in some solitude where rills abound,
Puts forth her buds and fann'd by genial airs
On all sides, hangs her boughs with whitest flowers,
But by a sudden whirlwind from its trench
Uptorn, it lies extended on the field;
Such . . . .

(William Cowper.)

Again the mutual animation of comparison and narrative is manifest. The cared for olive tree, cooled by gentle winds, its white blossoms shining, now uprooted and knocked down, embraces in the unity of a visible image both the care, pride, and grief of the parents, and the beauty, tenderness, and end of youth.

Now Euphorbos' death and Penelope's tears are no longer only death and tears as facts, but life itself as a whole of intertwined forces and motions, that permeate man and nature, soul and world alike. The single event is no longer merely one of many events in space and time; it "is" what it represents and becomes transparent. A whole lives in the part, and this whole is the way of things, nature herself, the structure of man's existence, or whatever term you prefer.

Here again none of the usual tertia that are only the common qualities of these tertia nor their aggregate, only their impact in the unity of a dynamic structure can be said to have this animating power. But we may try one further step. The *tertia* have a specific character. They are not mere properties common to both comparison and narrative. They all belong to a group of qualities that apply to the human soul as well as to material things, and thus are common both to subject and object. This is a very interesting group of qualities for which the current nomenclature supplies no satisfactory name. Psychologists speak of intermodal sense-qualities, meaning such qualities as hard and soft, warm and cold, clear and dull, that seem not to be restricted to one of our five senses as other qualities are. I cannot enter into the difficult and controversial problem of the nature of sense qualities that transcend any single sense. We can try to avoid the difficulty by assuming either that the qualities are different and only their names the same, or that we simply transfer to the ears what belongs to the eyes, and speak only metaphorically about warm and cold colors. The sameness of the names or the possibility of such transference remains to be explained. We might as well admit that these qualities are common to our different senses only because they have their origin and life in something that we might dare to call the human soul. At any rate, art has a particular interest in these qualities—just because they are common to subject and object and thus able both to fill an object with the life of the subject and to objectify the subject. This,

in fact, is what art achieves. Goethe, in the "Maximen und Reflexionen," speaks of art as concerned with a secret correspondence that links an unknown law in the subject to an unknown law in the object.

But even these mysterious qualities, as the common *tertia* of comparison and narrative, cannot yet account for the mutual animation. In themselves and isolated, they are abstract and dead. The poet interlocks them; it is through, in, and with one another that they live and are concrete. The real *tertium* is the particular pattern of their interlacing, which in comparison and narrative is "analogous," i.e., of corresponding structure. We do not come any nearer to Homer's wisdom, but perhaps we do by nearing his "beauty." This *tertium* is in a certain way a *primum*. It is obviously the function of the comparison to detach us from the object *qua* object. The poet induces us to look away from Penelope to the snow-covered mountains, from the dying Euphorbos to the uprooted olive tree. It is not the objective event, the fact *qua* fact, but an "image": the fact as manifestation of something far greater than itself. The object, event or fact becomes transparent; what in such transparence is visible, is a *primum* and not a *tertium*. Both comparison and narrative, the mountain and Penelope, the olive tree and the dying youth, object, event or fact, serve this *primum* and its transparence. Call this *primum* whatever you like, physis, the way of things, as the first Greek philosophers called it, or Goethe's unknown correspondence, or life, or the structure of human existence. Each of these terms is but a name and preliminary. In the context of this inquiry I prefer not to chose a term whose connotations predecides the philosophical problem, into which this study cannot enter though it intends to lead to its threshold.

The comparison, whatever it does for the narrative, has to be understood from what the narrative itself achieves as poetry. The story itself, with or without comparison, is life manifested; "existence" as the whole of a dynamic structure, made translucent in visible images. The story proceeds, events change; but this change itself is but a change of aspects, in each of which this dynamic structure is visible as a whole. To this end the metaphor serves the narrative in manifold ways.

Now to another example. Hermes, as Zeus' messenger, flies over the sea like a mew. (*Odyssey*, 5, 50.)

> Down he stoop'd to ocean
> And the billows lightly skimmed
> In form a sea mew, such as in the bays
> Tremendous of the barren deep her food
> Seeking, dips oft in brine her ample wing.

Even though the metaphor is sensitive to the slightest touch like a butterfly's wing and has lost in the translation most of its shining colors,

it may be said: The God does not catch fish. The poet follows the mew beyond the limits of a comparison and transgresses the *tertia*. Why? Certainly for the sake of perceptible concreteness: the fishing mew lives before our eyes. But the fishing means more. It gives the swiftness playful ease, power without labor. Hermes would catch fish if he pleased to do so. The flight of Hermes over the sea preludes the hardest part of Odysseus' journey. The next day Odysseus will start building the clumsy raft, which later will break in the storm. The mew catching fish is a contrast to the helpless raft. The gods are ῥεῖα ξῶντες—living in perfect ease. Heavy clumsiness is man's lot. Small words carry hardness into the image of ease; there are the momentous peaks of the waves, there was—a few verses before—the rod which, at Hermes' whim, blinds the eyes of men or awakens a sleeper. Here the comparison supports the contrast. God's ease helps the events to yield the picture of man's lot.

One other instance, by which many a modern interpreter was shocked. Odysseus, home in the guise of a beggar, observes the misdemeanor of his maids, but must master his rage. He turns over and over in his bed pondering upon the way to outwit the impudent suitors. (*Odyssey*, 20, 25.)

> As when some hungry swain o'er glowing coals
> A paunch for food prepares, from side to side
> He turns it oft and scarce abstains the while.

The function of the comparison is simple: the roasting of the "paunch for food"—in the Greek text a "blood sausage"—unites in one and the same image Odysseus turning over and over and the ripening of a plan, to be considered carefully, though with the craving impatience of a hungry man. For the critics, though, the blood sausage is encrusted with connotations that disqualify its roasting from serving as a comparison to spiritual distress. But this encrustment is of posthomeric origin.

The comparison, however, achieves more—not through common *tertia*, but through a latent difference in which the movement inherent in the blood sausage deviates from the development in the narrative. The blood sausage by being turned over and over will finally be done. We know it. It is not so with the plan. Odysseus, despite all his turning over and over does not find the solution. Athena comes, promises to help, and bids him fall asleep.

Some critics benevolently excuse such deviations from the strictly comparable with an abundant fantasy that carries the poet beyond his purpose. The critics are mistaken. Such deviations are frequent in Homer as they are in Shakespeare. They are devices of art, not blunders. The deviation is intended to show how events could or should have developed but actually did not. A harassed hero is compared to a lion—

the lion is killed—the hero fights his way through. The function is obvious: the hero could hardly escape, all odds are against him. Any actual happening in life is concrete and brimful of "being" together with a halo of possibilities that could or should happen. These possibilities, though not actually occurring, belong to the concrete reality. Their non-occurrence is present as danger in the case of the lion, as exigency in the case of Odysseus' plan.

A review of such deviations leads through diverse shades to extreme cases, in which the comparable disappears in the contrarious.

In *Iliad*, 11, 86, the difference has almost absorbed the similitude. The "as-so" of the comparison is replaced by a "when-then" of time.

> But what time his repast the woodman spreads
> In some umbrageous vale, his sinewy arms
> Wearied with hewing many a lofty tree,
> And his wants satisfied, he feels at length
> The pinch of appetite to pleasant food,
> Then was it, that encouraging aloud
> Each other, in their native virtue strong,
> The Grecians through the phalanx burst of Troy. . . .
> (William Cowper.)

Despite the "when-then" the battle effort of the Greeks is still compared with the woodchopper's toil. But the image aims altogether at the discrepancy. The discrepancy stresses the fighting spirit and staying power of the Greek—but moreover brings before our eyes the milder aspect of life and all that the Greek words for desire, sweetness, and pleasantness can convey to the image of the resting woodman. This is in the midst of a battle and without any other relation than the sameness of the hour.[1] Homer takes the utmost care that in his image of war, peace is present; life being neither war nor peace, but both of them together.

The so-called effect of contrast, relevant to all art, is question, not answer. Why contrasts? Just for a change? To avoid monotony? Or to increase the effect? None of these formulas reaches the poet.

Homer sees to it that he makes translucent in his images and their changes all the opposites, in between which life moves man to and fro. By minute, hardly perceptible movements of his brush he makes the hard and the soft, the dark and the bright, the heavy and the light, courage and fear, splendor and futility, stand close by one another, inescapably conjoined in the "way of things." Life, in being "in between"[2] them, is all of them. By their being "grown together"—"concretum"—life is concrete. Homer has a thousand means at his disposal. He avoids any "chorismos," any isolation of opposites. Countless poets made their heroes in armour and helmet shine like the sun, the moon, or the stars.

[1] Note Dante, *Inferno*, II, 1, uses a similar device.

[2] An emphatic term of Plato's.

Homer, however, in describing the Trojans forming their battlefront, makes Hector for a moment emerge from, and disappear into again, the crowd of nameless warriors as the moon emerges from a cloud, brightly shines, to be darkened again by another. Now the image lives, transparent as an image of life itself, which for the best is but moments of splendor between hours nameless and dim. Where the nature of events resists, as does the monotonous sequence of fights in the *Iliad*—the stiffest subject-matter a poet ever moulded—Homer interrupts his report and devotes a few verses to the country of the slain warrior and to the days of his happiness. Or, (*Iliad*, 13, 1) Zeus sitting on Mt. Ida looks down at the battle round Troy and turns his sparkling eyes away to the peace-loving people of Thrace, 'the milk-feeding, the justest of men." (*Iliad*, 22, 145) In the midst of a breathless passionate report of Achilles' pursuit of Hector, the poet makes the heroes rush past the two sources of the Skamander river and dwells upon their description, though these sources have nothing to do with the course of events: smoke rises from the hot spring, ice cold is the other; here are the earthen pots in which in times of peace the women of Troy and their pretty daughters wash their shining garments.

Such sentences prompted some interpreters to present Homer as a sort of pacifist. He is, however, neither a war-monger nor an appeaser but a poet trying to make life and the whole of its forces transparent in war as well as in peace. Shakespeare, in "King John," takes over from an earlier tragedy the plot as well as the greater part of the scenes and verses. He creates one figure: the bastard. Over against him kings, cardinals, lords and city people, even the plot, are shown up as only a petty world of mean politics and business transactions.

Certainly the contrast increases the effect. Gottfried Hermann says with respect to the Skamander passage of Homer in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*, "The image of peace makes the fight still more terrible." He thinks of Rembrandt, in whose pictures "light gets such force from shadow and shadow from light, as each of them never could have for itself."

Yes—and yet, it is not the aim of Homer to make the fight still more terrible, nor of Rembrandt to make darkness still darker. Moreover, there is in art as well as in poetry a way of opposing contrasts that does not intensify. Darkness and brightness can be contrasted and yet remain unsubstantial and void, if mere routine knowledge of the effects of contrasts puts them side by side. Their force is the secret of the great. They succeed in conjoining the dark and the light in a nameless whole, that is both dark and bright or hard and soft—or in whose context the dark becomes dark and the bright bright. To them the contrast is but a means of making visible this nameless whole.

In *Iliad*, 11, 547–557, 557–564, two comparisons follow each other. The first compares Aias to the pugnacious lion, the other to the stubborn ass.

The development of the battle is reported by a change of comparisons. Aias, the one, attacks the many, the great man assaults the lowly folk—like a lion dashing to the front, eager to fight; but a host of dogs and shepherds with spears and torches protect the herd, and the lion retires growling. Aias retreats like an ass who, under the blows of powerless boys who try to push him on, quietly grazes in a meadow and moves on appeasing his hunger when and how he pleases. Even retiring the one forces upon the many the law of their action. The two comparisons are each a complete picture. They follow each other immediately. Homer has us jump from the picture of the battle to the lion, from the lion to the ass, from the ass to the next phase of the battle in an astonishing detachment from the materiality of the facts. But it is through this detachment, that he is able to seize on the dynamic structure in which the mere facts have their living concreteness. Many a critic has blamed Homer for so swift a transition from a lion to an ass, or has even suggested that either the lion or the ass should be eliminated from the text. But the violent change from lion to ass affects only the materiality of the facts. The poet's concern, however, is not facts as facts, but life itself shining through facts. A minor poet, of course, should be on his guard in having his Aias suddenly change from a lion into an ass. Only a poet with such power of transparence can afford to deal so lightly with the materiality of the objects.

Iliad, 16, 751–776, uses three comparisons for one battle scene. Tone, color and emotion are intense and passionate. Hector and Patroclos, Greeks and Trojans fight for the corpse of Kebriones. Patroclos is compared to a lion who breaks into the stables and is struck in the breast. His own fighting spirit destroys him. But Patroclos is not even wounded. The deviation suggests that Patroclos, too, by his way of fighting will find death later, though not now. This impending death casts its shadow through the inaccuracy of a comparison. A touch of the poet's masterly brush: and future and past are implicated in the color of the present.

Now Hector jumps off the chariot, both heroes are like lions that fight for the carcass of a stag on the top of the mountains. Both are hungry and both "magnanimous." The masses of the Trojans and Greeks rush upon each other.

> As when the East wind and the South contend
> To shake some deep wood on the mountain's side,
> Or beech, or ash, or rugged cornel old
> With stormy violence the mingled boughs
> Smite and snap short each other, crashing loud;
> So Trojans and Achaians, mingling slew . . . .

Interpreters who cling to the similarity of material facts relate the pointed boughs to the pointed spears. The true *tertia*, however, are not of this sort, either here or elsewhere. Wind and wood give the unfettered

rage, passion, force, and disorder. Now follows immediately the picture of the dead man. Here he lies in the midst of hurled spears, flying arrows and stones, in a whirl of dust—"a tall man, longly spread, his horsemanship forgotten." So Homer joins life and death.

Homer's pictures even of battles aim at the whole of human existence. The course of events which he reports varies the aspects. The variation enhances the transparence. This whole is an impact of forces or movements or ways that are present in one another. It is in between the "momenta" of this whole that life is alive. This "knowledge" is Homer's wisdom. That he is able to make this knowledge visible is his greatness as a poet.

II

The use of comparison and contrast are not details of a technique. Polykleitos, the sculptor, insists that nothing is more difficult than "the work coming to the nails," obviously meaning the last treatment of the surface. This is the secret that lets even a fragment, if it is of a master's hand, outshine a second rate work, though complete. What holds for the small part holds the more for Homer's poems as wholes. In both the small and the large, Homer's wisdom is a kind of knowledge, and knowledge means knowledge of some kind of truth. What is this truth? Poets lie. They invent their stories.

According to an old definition "truth" is a concordance between "intellectus" and "res." But what is, in the case of a poet's truth, this "res"? It is not a fact that at any time has been or happened. If we grant, as I think we must, to Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" or "Anthony and Cleopatra" a considerable amount of truth, we do not say: "So it was," but rather "So it is"—meaning that the facts or events, though they may be the poet's invention, represent an "it" that "is." What is this "it" and what does this "is" mean? Since, however, this language implies the basic question of what once was called "ontology," I carefully avoid it and say instead of "So it is," "Such is life," although from a philosophical point of view this terminology has great disadvantages. Let us assume that in the case of Homer or Shakespeare the "it" means life, not this or that life, the life of a girl, or a youth, or an old man, but life as an impact of forces, movements, and that this impact is not an aggregate, but the whole of a dynamic structure whose different features are related to, and present in, one another. They cannot be isolated, since day owes to night that it is day, and life and death are fettered to each other by an iron necessity. Let us assume that this whole is the "it" in question.

Homer's truth is concordance with this "it" that shines through the facts he reports. Though this "it" is called "life" life is not a phenomenon

that occurs in some places in a lifeless world. If it is called the structure of human existence, human existence stands for the life of plants and animals, which is swayed by no different powers—and thus stands for nature herself, which throughout is alive. Hence, nature can disclose herself in man, and man in nature. Wind and waves, trees blossoming and withering, stars and clouds accompany the human melody, repeat and vary it in their own way—as the same in all its ever changing variations. The cosmos Homer mirrors is the human soul, the soul the cosmos; both mirrored in each other tell the same eternal story. If there are gods in Homer, these gods are forces and powers of life itself, the ways of things. They themselves are the bright and the dark, the shrewd and the powerful, chastity, bashfulness, lust, desire. Since they are living personalities of distinct shape, and not pale abstractions, they seem to be and are many; but they are related to human existence, and if they are different, immortal, and never aging, they are so only to represent in their very otherness the transientness in which they have no share. They are as powers of life elevated above this life, as living beings enmeshed in life, full of action and passion and deeply human—only that their wounds heal again and their being is new everyday and untouched by whatever experience they have. As there is no danger, their life is play. Though, as powers, they are eternal, they are, as persons, embraced by Fate and Necessity to which even they must submit—between play and seriousness, power and fate. But so is life. This ambiguity is their charm, this charm is full of wisdom. Though they are many, there is in their manyness still the unity of a structure that they rule as powers and represent as persons, crossing one another, avoiding, outwitting, and rallying with one another—death and life interlaced, brute force and soft sweetness together the way of things; an eternal order, one and unique. The relation of god to man in the *Iliad* may well be the poet's most personal creation. The immortal gods behave "as if" they were mortal—mortal man acts as if he were immortal. God's play is his seriousness. The two "as if's" are opposed to each other. The counterpoint of Being and Becoming is but one and the same song. Here the poet reaches beyond the philosopher.[3]

The horses of Achilles weep over the dead Patroclos' glamorous youth; grief, transiency, love, devotion, embracing man and beast because bound together in life itself. Wherever Homer speaks of death, life and its splendor stand close by. Death stands beside every life. Sweet and bitter, bright and dark, hard and soft are present in one another. Homer takes care that no one of them is isolated—passion is accompanied by deliberation, the glorious by the inglorious, courage by fear, enduring by weakening. In all the battles of the *Iliad*, Homer reports facts for the sake

[3] Cf. Karl Reinhardt, *Das Parisurteil*, Frankfurt, 1938.

not of facts but of the shining life, that lights up in the one and is quenched in the other. This and that town far away has born him as his father's pride. He as no one else knew how to curb the horses and now the earth drinks his blood. Man moves in between knowledge and blindness; blind are the many, but Homer's most brilliant heroes, Achilles and Hector, are altogether those who know, whereas Agamemnon, Menelaos, Aias merely stumble in the dark. Achilles, in the splendor of his victory, talks to the Trojan boy who in vain begs for his yet unworthy life, about his own approaching death, the death of the so much better man. Taking leave of Andromache, Hector foretells Troy's fall. As Achilles, in his implacable rage, refuses to help the Greeks, he rises above the particular situation, above this war against Troy. He knows human futility. But behind this knowledge of Hector and Achilles the blindness of the many still lurks so that the concrete distinctness of action and speech brings to light the whole of mortal life which forever is in between knowledge and blindness, might and futility, the one in danger and the other in need. It is this transparency we have in mind, whenever we feel inclined to admit that poetry can be concerned with truth, by saying, "So it is."

Homer is motion throughout: acting and suffering, passionate change. But this whole, that becomes transparent though it has no name, does not move. It holds all living beings in its iron bands. Homer lets the days follow one another. Rosy fingered dawn announces the day, the sun rises and sets, and the paths of mortal men grow dark again. He usually uses the same verses whenever a day begins or ends. Not casually—the way of things made manifest in restless change remains what it ever was and ever will be.

Homer's wisdom, his truth and his beauty have one and the same source. It is his wisdom to know this truth; it is his greatness as poet to make it manifest in visible images.

It might be that from this statement, if it is correct, some conclusions could be drawn. It may have some bearing on the history of Greek philosophy or on the mysterious problem of "quality" or "value" in art—[4] or even on the level on which an inquiry into the "meaning of truth" might discover a less poor meaning of a less poor truth. All such conclusions, however, are beyond the scope of the present study.

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[4] Cf. the author's article "Die Gleichnisse Homers und die Anfang der Philosophie" in *die Antike*, Leipsig, 1937; and "Traktat vom Schonen," Frankfurt am Main, 1935.